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# U.S. Suggests SEATO Hold Thai Maneuvers

## Deterrent Asked To Communist Advance in Laos

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Staff Reporter

The United States yesterday called on its Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) partners to consider a joint military "exercise" in northeast Thailand as a deterrent to the increasing advances of the Communist-led Pathet Lao forces in neighboring Laos.

Throughout the day and evening, it was learned, the representatives of such SEATO members as Thailand, France, Australia and New

*Laotian neutralist commander retreats further into the hills. Page D4.*

*How Prince Souphanouvong, who has led pro-Communist Pathet Lao for ten years, rose to power in Laos. Page D5.*

*House Foreign Affairs Committee votes additional \$125 million in aid for South Viet-Nam. Page A5.*

Zealand were summoned to the State Department to be sounded out on repeating last summer's SEATO maneuvers in northeast Thailand in which 25,000 SEATO-nation troops were involved.

The SEATO ambassadors, after conferring with William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, immediately began messaging their home capitals for reaction to the U.S. proposal.

The SEATO exercise proposal came after the State Department, for the second day in a row, warned that the United States is "not ruling out any measure which may be necessary" — military or otherwise — "to preserve the neutrality and independence of Laos."

These other events involved Laos yesterday:

- U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai E. Stevenson was summoned home

hurriedly from Europe to go before the U.N. Security Council today with a full-dress review of Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

- France proposed a new international conference, reportedly to be held in Geneva with high-level diplomats, which would seek a meeting of minds among the Communist, non-Communist and neutralist world on what should be done about the deteriorating neutralist government of Laos Premier Prince Souvana Phouma.

- Thailand's Ambassador to the United States, Sukich Nimmanheminda, emerged from his State Department conference with Bundy to declare that his country would "welcome any action that would lead to any deterrent" against Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

- In response to a British request to intercede in the Laos situation, Communist China had the Peking press emphasize that there is no fighting in Laos worth bothering about—and whatever activity has occurred is mainly the result of neutralist soldiers' defecting to a new and unholy alliance between Laos's neutralists and rightists.

Any new SEATO exercise in northeast Thailand, it was understood, would have the advantage of beefing up Thailand's vulnerable area just across the Mekong River from Laos without actually stepping into the military quicksand of Laos itself.

It also would avoid involving Thailand in any embarrassing domestic politics there. Such embarrassment arose when a purely U.S. backstop contingent of 5000. Marines, Air Force and Army men was dispatched to Thailand's vulnerable northeast section during the last major Pathet Lao advances in 1962.

## Equipment Left

Thai Ambassador Sukich was careful not to emphasize to reporters yesterday that his country first would have to "request" sending in U.S. backstop troops, and no such request had been made.

Military equipment was left under "mothball" protection in northeast Thailand after both the U.S. troop movement there in 1962 and last year's SEATO exercise.

Returning to New York yesterday after a phone call from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Ambassador Stevenson emphasized that Southeast Asia was "getting hotter" and the U.S. "attaches the greatest importance" to stemming further Communist advances.

Stevenson's speech before the U.N. Security Council today will come in the form of a reply to a complaint by Cambodia, already before the U.N., that both South Viet-Nam and her U.S. military advisers have been molesting Cambodia's border villages.

## Cool to French Plan

Administration officials worked late into the night yesterday trying to weave into Stevenson's speech a complete documentation of Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

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As for the French proposal for a new international conference, Administration officials characterized their reaction as "cool." Washington is inclined to look upon French President de Gaulle as a meddler in Southeast Asian affairs who talks in high-blown terms about neutralizing the area but without spelling out any practical means.

Instead, U.S. officials are inclined to favor a proposal made earlier this week by Laos Premier Souvanna for a more informal meeting of diplomats—at the ambassador level—who already are in Entente.

The United States wants a Laos conference confined to Laos and suspects that a repetition of the 1954 Geneva Conference of 14 Communist, non-Communist and neutral nations would end up in a free-for-all demanding the "neutralization" of all Southeast Asia and the departure of Western influence.

Robert H. Estabrook, of The Washington Post Foreign Service, reported from London that the British government is encouraging Souvanna's proposed meeting and trying to impress Communist China with the danger of "escalation" should the Communist-led Pathet Lao troops push on to the Mekong River border with Thailand.

Estabrook also reported that the British government, while "very worried" about the capture of Laos' Plain of Jars by the Pathet Lao, still thinks that the Pathet Lao's Communist Chinese and Communist North Vietnamese backers have limited objectives: They wish to regain the territory the Pathet Lao held just before the 1962 Geneva peace conference, rather than to drive on to the Mekong and divide Laos in two.

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